Beyond the Frame: Painted Pattern in Extended Pictorial Space

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Declaration of Originality

I, Susan Buret, ............................................................... hereby declare that the thesis here presented is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributable to other authors.
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BEYOND THE FRAME: PAINTED PATTERN IN EXTENDED PICTORIAL SPACE

Abstract

This practice-led project investigates ways of extending pictorial space beyond the rectilinear frame of conventional painting. Releasing the painting from the confines of this support raises the question of where the painting begins and ends. This exploration took the form of a series of site-responsive installations of two and three-dimensional paintings based on patterns from Islamic textiles, tiles and quilts and, on observations of pattern in architecture. Different approaches to the edge of pictorial space were explored in a series of works that tested the use of colour, motif and interval, positive and negative space, human scale and pattern variation. The material qualities of paint and paper, modular format and textiles were employed to investigate the research question and to open new modes of process and pictorial expression.
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Introduction

On a clear autumn day, I walk along a cypress-lined ridge into a garden filled with a riotous discord of roses, marigolds, dahlias and zinnias. Sunlight glints on the water jets of rows of fountains. I continue on and find myself inside the richly tessellated surfaces of the Nasrid Palace. These walls within the red fortress, El Alhambra, in Granada, Spain are covered with the geometric pattern that has informed much of my painting for the past ten years. I call it my stolen geometry from the gardens of love.

I first visited El Alhambra in 1975 and returned there in 2013 during the first year of my Master’s research. I wanted to observe these patterns again because I believed there was more to this experience than the colourful designs that I had been painting on rectilinear supports. I came to my project from a studio practice where I made conventional paintings of geometric pattern based on Islamic designs for exhibition in commercial galleries (Fig. 1). When I started my Masters my aim was to explore new means to evoke the experience of entering spaces such as the Nasrid Palace. I set out to capture the play of light across the decorated surfaces, and to create the effect of being enveloped by the pattern of these regal domestic spaces. This challenge led to my research question—what happens when painted pattern is released from the two-dimensional rectilinear confines of traditional painting?

Fig. 1. Antidote 2 (2013), acrylic on linen, 100 x 100cm

Pattern was the formal device I employed to give visual expression to my experiences. The artist Brigit Riley describes this process as painting to make visible the pleasures of sight.\(^2\) However, I was interested in using painting to engage the viewer visually, spatially and affectively to make visible the way in which we engage with the inherent qualities of pattern in our environment. This led me to question how and why we engage with pattern and how these modes of engagement can be utilised to create a reflexive relationship with the viewer in site-responsive paintings. The writings of mathematician Ian Stewart\(^3\) on how we use pattern, the studies of Neil Dodgson\(^4\) Professor of Graphics and Imaging, and psychologist Gert van Tonder\(^5\) were valuable references when addressing these questions. In Chapter One I will discuss how these researchers influenced my process.

To begin to understand why we engage with pattern I considered my own experience. My world is densely patterned. I fill my house with rugs, textiles and decorated ceramics, my garden overflows with plants and flowers whose colour, structure and seasonality I observe daily. I am besotted with pattern, specifically geometric pattern. The following quote from the artist, William Hogarth, describes my experience:

Intricacy in form... I shall define to be that peculiarity in the lines, which compose it, that _leads the eye a wanton kind of chase_, and from the pleasure that it gives the mind, entitles it to the name beautiful.\(^6\)

Hogarth has described the pleasure of search and identification of an inherent quality in a visual image that engages the viewer. This pleasure of identification occurs when we can establish a pattern among the regular colours and shapes in a given field.

For the purpose of my project I define pattern as an established order that we have identified. Investigating how we engage with pattern I established that the inherent qualities of pattern can be used to orient, predict, classify or claim. While we encounter pattern in a multitude of ways in everyday life, in my project I chose to focus on four of the ways in which we use it. These were to navigate and measure, to express observations and


\(^5\) Gert J. van Tonder, ‘Perceptual Disruption and Composure in Bridget Riley’s Fall’, _Leonardo_ 43, No. 3 (2010).

memories, to order and store information and finally, to claim territory and space. They had particular resonance for me as they express the primary ways in which I engage with pattern.

Pattern as formal device is well suited to extend pictorial space, as it is theoretically endless. Discussing textiles American psychotherapist Jane Graves writes, ‘there is no end to pattern... [it] has to be artificially truncated, by borders or hemlines – scissors and stitching’.7 The concept of the infinite pattern is also raised by art historian Rosalind Krauss who suggests that the grid, which forms the armature of geometric pattern, logically extends to infinity, having arbitrary boundaries imposed upon it by a given painting or sculpture.8 She goes on to describe it as a mapping of space within the work. In my research I tested this concept in a series of installations where I employed the mapping properties of pattern to suggest visual and spatial paths. My first work, Navigating by the Stars, employs these approaches and is discussed in Chapter One. I further tested this by using pattern to respond to architectural form or to create affect in the works floored and Axis discussed in Chapter Two.

Hogarth alluded to how which composition can be used to engage the viewer. I was curious to see how, through the expansion of painting beyond its frame, I could use composition to lead the viewer on a chase through architectural space. To test this, I made a series of site-responsive installations of painted pattern in exhibition spaces in Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong. These works expressed my ephemeral experiences of colour, light and pattern in nature and architectural settings. This provided me with opportunities to make works responding to the specificity of each exhibition space. My methodology was to produce, install, document and evaluate each body of work. In these exhibitions I explored the material characteristics of paper, painting on three-dimensional surfaces, building works from modular elements and combining textiles and painting as strategies to extend pictorial space.

In the course of my studio investigations the following artists and theorists were key influences and I will refer to them further throughout the three chapters of this exegesis. Painted pattern has appeared throughout the history of Western painting from mediaeval

manuscripts and altarpieces to the depiction of interiors by Renaissance artists. However, for my project, I focused my research on 20th-century and contemporary artists.

There is a strong history of the use of geometry and pattern dating from the early 20th century where women artists working with pattern and textiles included Sophie Tauber-Arp, Sonia Delaunay and Annie Albers. These were important references and I will discuss them in relation to my work in Chapter Three. The artists of the Pattern and Decoration movement starting in the late 1960s, including Joyce Kozloff, Valerie Jaudon and Robert Kuscher along with their contemporary, the art critic Amy Goldin, were valuable in defining pattern and articulating how I source and relate to it. Bridget Riley’s writings were a great source of insight for me in gaining greater self-understanding as a painter, while her works, and research about them, informed my practice. The painters Mary Heilmann and Jim Isermann were important references when considering how to install *Navigating by the Stars* and also led me to explore seating in my installations as discussed in Chapter One. In Chapter Two I will refer to the contemporary artists Peter Halley, Rosemarie Trock, Sarah Morris, Hanne Darboven and Andreas Angelidakis whose work I saw on my field trip to Berlin. Towards the end of my studio research when I introduced textiles into my project and made works about domestic space and territory I researched the work of Michelle Grabner, Melinda Harper, Dominique Pétrin and Javier de Riba to contextualise my work. I will discuss these artists in Chapter Three.

When I extended my work beyond the traditional frame of painting, the writings of art theorist Miwon Kwon on site-specificity were valuable to contextualise my project. Kwon’s schema divides site-specificity into the sub categories of site-determined, site-oriented, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive and site-related. She argues that there are three paradigms for site-specificity. The first is based on the physical attributes of the site and the viewer’s phenomenological engagement. In the second paradigm the site is further constituted through social, economic and political processes related to the art world. In the third, the site is discursive; it can be anywhere that the artist chooses to be involved, be it a billboard, a political debate, a social cause. By extending pictorial space, my work was at first primarily experiential. However, in moving from the production of work on a rectilinear

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support, which could be purchased and easily displayed, to making installations for exhibition in a series of non-commercial gallery spaces I was working within the second paradigm. Through my references to claiming of space and territory and the use of textiles my later works fell into the third paradigm having associations with the issues of ethnicity, diaspora, homelessness, and feminism. While I am aware of the importance of these last issues in current social and artistic discourse, my project is primarily an investigation of the effects of formal language in painting. I will therefore not develop a discussion of my research via a social or political paradigm.

Reflecting on Kwon’s subcategories and my methodology I determined that my works were site-responsive as the use of modular units and my installation process allowed them to be reinstalled and adapted to a number of sites. Considering this I was expanding my work not only physically into the gallery space but also as an entity that included the process of installation and the physical site itself.

During my project I made two field trips that influenced the course of my studio investigations. My first field trip to Spain was instrumental in providing visual stimuli or the pleasures of sight that Bridget Riley described. On this trip I investigated pattern, colour and light in architecture. In Barcelona my observations of the façades of Gaudí’s buildings led to experiments with the materiality of paper, where I used cutting, layering, folding and rolling to extend painting beyond the two-dimensional picture plane. I went on to explore the Moorish architecture of Seville, Cordoba and Granada where I was interested in the effects of light and perspective on tiled walls and floors, visual phenomena I explored through wall and floor works made on my return. At the end of my trip I spent two weeks as artist in residence at La Joya Arte + Ecologica in the high altitude desert region of southern Spain. Here my perception of colour and form in the bleached-out late autumn landscape led me to consider how colour and tone could be used to create illusion as a means of extending pictorial space. This field research resulted in new modes of extending pictorial space through layering paper and using the floor as picture plane that I continued to test throughout my project. I discuss the development of these works in Chapter Two.

My second trip was to Berlin to visit the *Wall Works* exhibition at the *Hamburger Bahnhof Museum*. There I was able to research the works of contemporary painters and installation artists who used the wall as pictorial support and painting as a space-defining element. I observed that when painting became installation it opened up the opportunity to create visual and spatial experiences. This was achieved through using colour, tone, tactility and form, the tools of conventional painting along with display, arrangement, scale, lighting and the architectural elements of the exhibition space to create affect. In creating this entity the artist was occupying the space, creating a particular atmosphere. This led me to question whether the practice of installation painting reflected the way in which we claim territory and domestic space? I have always been interested in the beauty and symbolism of the patterns in oriental rugs and in the way nomadic tribes use them to set up home. Transporting their patterns with them not only identified their tribal origins, regardless of where they were, but also physically delineated their secure domestic space. This activity is analogous to the act of installing my work and was one that I investigated in my later works as discussed in Chapter Three.

During the course of my project my practice-led research gave rise to two further areas of enquiry. Firstly how and why do we engage with pattern and how can this be utilised to engage the viewer in site-responsive paintings? And secondly does the practice of installation painting reflect the way in which we claim territory and domestic space?

In addressing my research question I have described the development of my practice-led research in chronological order in this exegesis as each body of work was informed and influenced by the evaluation of the previous installation. In Chapter One I describe my first works in which I began developing a modular format and investigated the use of human scale to reflect the navigational aspects of pattern. In answer to my question I found that creating a large-scale work on a curved wall not only provided the viewer with an opportunity to engage with the internal formal elements of the work and also with the particular architectural characteristics of the installation space. The large scale and use of positive and negative space throughout the work also opened it up to viewing from multiple viewpoints or while moving through the space of the room.

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Chapter Two describes works that resulted from my examination of pattern *in situ* during my fieldwork studies. I will discuss how I used colour and tone and experimented with the materiality of paper and extended pictorial space onto the floor. In these works while still concerned with the application of paint to surface I extended the paintings into the third dimension of the space contained within the gallery walls and also used the floor as pictorial surface.

In Chapter Three I will discuss how I explored affect and the establishment of territory through the use of pattern and how I used texture, layering, new materials and a different means of pictorial depiction to create patterned works. At this stage of my project I introduced the medium of embroidery into my project and I will discuss the reasons and influences behind my decision to include the new medium in my studio investigations. In these works, the extension of pictorial space provided the opportunity to create affect and evoke memory.
Chapter 1: *Navigating by the Stars*

**Introduction**

In this chapter I outline the beginnings of my studio-based research. I begin by addressing questions about why I use pattern, how I source the imagery for my paintings and why we find pattern engaging. This is to clarify the best strategies for engaging and communicating with the viewer in my work. I discuss two studies of the works the painter Bridget Riley and how these informed my manipulation of hue and tone. These studies also informed how I began to use deletion and the variation of pattern elements to provide an engaging and exciting visual experience.

This chapter explores these questions via my first major work, *Navigating by the Stars* in which I used forms derived from Islamic patterns. In this work I questioned what formal devices I could use to create a site-responsive work that addressed the way we use the inherent qualities of pattern to navigate and measure the world around us. I evaluate my manipulation of positive and negative space, which I used to provide visual pathways as navigational cues and human scale. I further used this device to provide the viewer with a means of measuring and relating to the space within the work and its installation site.

Finally, in this chapter, I assess the work produced in the early stages of my project. I identify two shifts that occurred in my painting practice and shaped the course of my research project—the use of modular units as supports and painting on three-dimensional surfaces.

**Motif, Materials and Process**

Before beginning my first major work I reflected on the key aspects of my studio practice to better understand the devices that would be central to my project. I identified the underlying geometry that I use to generate different motifs together with a love of oriental rugs as the chief reasons behind my use of Islamic pattern. Considering why the viewer might engage with pattern-based painting, I examine our innate need to engage with pattern as an aid to understanding and prediction.
My interest in pattern began in the late 1960s when ethnic patterns and textiles were part of the prevailing zeitgeist. In 1971 I began collecting oriental rugs. I became enthralled with geometric pattern and, while I have no mystical or religious beliefs, I experienced what Tunisian artist Emna Zghal describes as the 'enjoyment of patterns and grids, so often linked to religion, magic, and states of being not-quite-there'.

In 1975, seeing the Antonioni film *The Passenger*, I was inspired to visit the Gaudi buildings in Barcelona, and the patterned tiles and textiles in El Alhambra and Morocco.

At this time American artist Joyce Kozloff began studying geometric pattern as a system for her art. She appropriated these patterns from quilts, books of geometric pattern and Islamic architecture in Morocco. Kozloff’s early works coincided with a renewed scholarly interest in pattern including the critical writing of Amy Goldin’s 1976 essay *Patterns, Grids and Painting* and the publication of Gombrich’s *The Sense of Order* in 1979. Kozloff credits Gombrich’s book with providing her with a way to see how the essential qualities of patterned decoration reside in its fabricated order. Her current paintings continue a dialogue with the history of style and ornament.

I was not making work at that time but I see this period as the beginning of my engagement with geometric pattern and, like Kozloff, I appropriate and develop many of my designs from quilts and Islamic architecture.

As mentioned in the Introduction my interest extends beyond the pattern itself to how it interacts with its setting. American artist Frank Stella describes the work of the Iranian artist Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian as ‘taking a geometry that is so tied to architecture, actually tied to a wall, and making it into an independent surface.’ Much of my work, as well as appropriating pattern, concerns my observation of it in architecture. In this project I worked with site-responsive installation to extend the independent surface back into architectural space to evoke this experience.

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15 Ibid, 77.
Next I questioned what is about pattern that draws us to use and interact with it. We all engage with pattern in everyday life from choosing clothing and household items to identifying pattern as symbol for example the ‘no go’ areas delineated by checked police tape. Mathematician Ian Stewart begins his book *Nature’s Numbers: Exploring Order and Pattern in the Universe* by stating, ‘we live in a universe of patterns’. He describes how the human mind has developed a formal system of thought for recognising, classifying and exploiting matter which is the field of mathematics. Stewart goes on to explain that patterns possess utility as well as beauty. I paint patterns because I find them extremely beautiful but I know that we look at, engage with and develop patterns for many reasons other than aesthetic gratification. My project is to express some of these associations through painting and to interrogate how I can use materials, process and form in my research.

Artist, writer and curator Janis Jefferies states that the exchange between maker and viewer, or writer and reader, is inherent in the nature of pattern. Investigating this reflexivity between creator and audience, my questions were: ‘What is it about painted pattern that engages the viewer?’ and ‘How can I use the devices of painting: form, material, colour and tone to create an engaging viewer experience?’

This ability to engage the viewer has been explored in several studies of Bridget Riley’s paintings. Psychologist Gert van Tonder studies perceptual disruption contending that visual tension is engaging. He has written about Bridget Riley’s work *Fall* identifying ‘a source of visual rivalry between compositional elements’ in an artwork as the source of this tension (Fig. 2).

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18 Ibid, 3.
20 Gert J. van Tonder, *Perceptual Disruption and Composure in Bridget Riley’s Fall*.
Neil Dodgson, Professor of Imaging and Graphics at Cambridge University, hypothesised that the patterns in Riley’s paintings interacted pleasantly with the brains pattern detection mechanism because of the balance between the expected and the surprising. He concluded that pattern variation forced the brain to do some work resulting in what he describes as an aesthetically interesting experience.  

Furthermore, Ian Stewart suggests that these irregularities in pattern are engaging because they allow recognition of exceptions and identification of predators and are therefore useful for survival.

While both Dodgson and van Tonder had studied works that could be classified as optical art, I felt that their findings could also be applied to painted pattern that doesn’t include optical illusion. I set out to explore their findings. As my research was practice-led and not based on a series of controlled experiments I used variations in tone and colour and omitted pattern elements in my works without making precise measurements or collecting empirical data.

My first questions were how do I source and use the patterns in my paintings? And why do I use Islamic pattern? For several years I have sourced my patterns from Islamic designs, following a process of establishing the grid that is the armature of the pattern and then

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21 Dodgson, ‘Balancing the Expected and the Surprising in Geometric Patterns’.  
22 Stewart, Natures Numbers: Discovering Order and Pattern in the Universe, 8.
redeveloping the pattern using colour and tone to emphasise different motifs within the design.

![Fig. 3. Untitled (2013)](image)

![Fig. 4. Pattern from the Esrefoglu Mosque](image)

I began by making studies to test geometric patterns and materials to see what would be most effective before I began a large-scale work. My first work was a gouache on paper study using greens and purples (Fig. 3) based on a pattern from the Esrefoglu mosque in Turkey (Fig. 4). I then made *Esrefoglu* 1 and 2 using acrylic on gessoed ply panels using a similar palette to the gouache on paper (Figs 5 and 6). These studies established the palette and pattern for my next work *Navigating by the Stars*.

![Fig. 5. Esrefoglu 1 (2013), acrylic on board, 91 x 91 cm.](image)

![Fig. 6. Esrefoglu 2 (2013), acrylic on board, 91 x 91 cm.](image)
Navigating by the Stars

Navigating by the Stars was the first major work in my project (Fig. 7). I set out to test strategies for extending pictorial space beyond the rectilinear support of a conventional painting in order to explore how pattern might be used to navigate and measure. I will now discuss how I worked with the formal qualities of painting and site-specific considerations to capture these qualities and make the viewer feel welcome in the installation space. I will discuss the theorists and artists I researched when making decisions about how I made the work.

I wanted to introduce unexpected variations to engage with the embodied perception of the viewer in order to test Dodgson’s findings that the irregularities in Bridget Riley’s works make them more pleasing to the viewer. 23 Manipulating colour and tone provided some of the change in the overall pattern however I decided to use negative space as a way of introducing the overt irregularity that Dodgson had investigated. 24

In Art in Space, Al Berkman used the term negative space to differentiate between ‘positive space (object), and negative space (the space intervening between objects, and the space which the object occupies).’ 25 Removing some of the pattern would introduce irregularities and give the opportunity to experiment with positive and negative space to

23 Dodgson, “Balancing the Expected and the Surprising in Geometric Patterns.”
24 Negative space is defined as ‘an area of a painting… containing no contrasting shapes, figures or colours itself, but framed by solid or positive forms, esp. one that constitutes a particularly powerful or significant part of the whole composition’. Oxford English Dictionary Electronic Resource, http://www.oed.com.virtual.anu.edu.au. Accessed 1 July 2015.
25 Ibid.
engage the viewer in my next works. The remaining pattern could provide paths across the work and fragments of the motif could be used to identify sub-motifs within the pattern.

![Pattern Image]

**Fig. 8. Navigating by the Stars, work in progress**

In choosing the colour and tone of the work I wanted to set up a system that enabled me to manipulate the specific readings of the overall pattern. Furthermore, I wanted colour to contribute to the affect—that is, the emotional experience of the work. For me capturing and conveying this affect comes from my lived experience. I am interested in the changes in colour and tone that I observe throughout the course of the day and I often work with the colours I observe in my garden. My walk to my studio is often disrupted as I stop to look at flowers and vegetables and through my studio windows I observe the changes in light and colour that occur with weather and seasonal changes.

At the time I made *Navigating by the Stars* I had been watching the purple irises that grow near my studio door for several weeks observing how they ranged from warm cobalt violet through to cool purple with changes in light and shadow. I chose to use these two purples to establish the dominant element in the pattern, using the close tonality and warm/cool hues to create a visual tension. Rather than working with the cool greens of the iris leaves I choose a warm green-gold to introduce the purple’s complement to the work and to cause the high-toned secondary element in the design to come to the foreground.
For the background colour (the negative space) I mixed the warm green with white adding small amounts of the cobalt violet to make a high-toned warm colour that would cause the work to float, rather than recede, on the wall on which it was installed (Fig. 8).

I began Navigating by the Stars by painting nine sheets of watercolour paper to see how the variation on the Esrefoglu pattern would work on a larger scale (Fig. 8) as I planned to install the work on the curved wall of the Photomedia Teaching Space at the ANU School of Art. I decided that the scale of the pattern and the tonal variation would work well when the work was installed in a large space.

Initially I considered the room’s characteristics and what might be the right size for the work. As my aim was to engage the viewer visually and bodily with the site and refer to pattern’s use by the viewer to navigate and measure I considered how I might introduce elements that would give human scale to the site. How the work would relate to its specificities and how I could introduce visual cues to orientation.

I considered how the work might relate to the architectural elements of the space. Art historian Miwon Kwon describes how site-specific art ‘whether interruptive or assimilative, gave itself up to its environmental context, being formally determined or directed by it.’26 I made Navigating by the Stars using 64 sheets of watercolour paper, each measuring 57 by 76 cm, installed 4 sheets high by 16 sheets long to fit the curved wall and to be assimilated into the space (Fig. 11). I decided on this size as there was spraycrete ceiling and a door that would disrupt the pattern if I continued it further along the wall. I didn’t want these earthly elements to disrupt my ‘cosmic’ space.

Human Scale

In this section I will discuss how I worked with the scale pattern motifs and architectural elements of the Photomedia Teaching Space to introduce human scale. I will argue that

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human scale introduced through pattern provides a means for the inhabitant to navigate and measure and therefore feel comfortable within a space.

The room had panelled windows that were of similar proportions to the watercolour sheets I was working with and the dimensions of these elements added human scale to the work and installation space. Measurements taken from the human body have been used as units of linear scale since ancient times. The Greek philosopher Protagoras made the statement 'Man is the measure of all things'. While it is argued that Protagoras was referring to his belief that each person’s sense perceptions are true for their owner and that education could add to and change moral values, these words also suggest that the embodiment of standards against which all things including the moral and physical are measured. Early Babylonian and Egyptian records, and the Bible, indicate that length was first measured with the forearm, hand, or finger. Human scale is defined as 'a scale appropriate, specific, or comprehensible to people; now esp. with reference to architecture or design' or more specifically when referring to architecture as 'the size or proportion of a building element or space, or article of furniture; relative to the structural or functional dimensions of the human body'.

In the twentieth century Swiss architect, Le Corbusier, developed Le Modulor (Fig. 9) a system of measurement based on the human body. He used this humanising element in all his architectural designs arguing that existing measurement systems were arbitrary and that 'quite on the contrary, nature offers us mathematical proportions of an abundant richness in all her phenomena'. In 1945 when Einstein met Le Corbusier he recognised the importance of a system that would provide a relationship between the built environment and its occupants declaring that Le Modulor made it ‘difficult to do things badly and easy to do things well’. While this may not always be the case, the use of

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human scale did provide an obvious way for the inhabitant to relate to the large structures that could be built with the development of new building materials and technologies.

Fig. 9. Le Corbusier, *Le Modulor*

The system of glazing in the outer wall of the Photomedia space had probably been designed for ease of installation and to meet structural and budgetary constraints. It provided a human scale that would have been lacking if it were fitted with a single sheet of glass. Looking in or out, the observer has a grid that can be measured against a human arm span to establish the size and distance relationships of whatever they are looking at. My modular work, using sheets of paper that could be held with both hands extended to be a little more than shoulder width apart echoed these panes of glass. Like them it would be easy to transport and install and reflected similar concerns with scale and pragmatism. I introduced another element of human scale to the large work by basing the diameter of the most dominant pattern motif, produced by the purple and red violet hexagons surrounding the pale yellow star, on my hand span (Fig. 10).
Site Specificity

Having examined how the viewer might engage with the individual pattern elements I wanted to explore ways in which the painting might be used to express ways to navigate the installation and create an embodied response. Kwon examines site specificity ‘as a peculiar cipher of art and spatial politics... a spatial cultural discourse’. My aim was to address Kwon’s first paradigm outlined in the Introduction where she describes the relationship between the work and the viewer:

Site-specific work is focused on establishing an inextricable, indivisible relationship between the work and its site, and demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work’s completion.33

To this end I considered how I might suggest visual and spatial paths through the work through cues to orientation. I asked how might the viewer move through the space taking into account the atypical nature of the room created by the curved wall (Fig.10). I thought of the viewer standing before the wall and how I might provide visual cues that would allow the viewer to engage with both the totality and the fine detail of the large work I was planning to make.

33 Kwon, ‘One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity’, 86.
I wanted the viewer to sense the enclosure provided by the curved wall and to be moved through the work with a sense of orientation within architectural and pictorial space. To address this I varied the background colour from warm to cool from left to right to introduce cues to orientation. I used omission of elements to give an oscillating curving rhythm to the pattern that could be read horizontally from one end of the work to the other (Fig.11).

As mentioned above, omission of pattern elements also provided the opportunity to work with negative space. The lightest tone of the composition, the pale yellow was the background colour and the darker colours held together as the motif of the pattern. While pattern is conventionally defined as repeated artistic design or motif art critic Amy Goldin challenged this notion of pattern as being defined by the repetition of a motif or design and argued instead that pattern was established by the constancy of interval between motifs that were not necessarily identical. So I considered how the relationship of motif and interval could be varied to provide not only elements of the unexpected in the work, but also to highlight motifs and sub-motifs, setting up the a visual rivalry to create visual paths and rhythms within the work. This interval between pattern motifs is the

negative space in the work. Therefore, by omitting pattern elements, what were regular intervals in a pattern become negative space, a pictorial device in the painting.

Reflecting on the necessity of the physical presence of the viewer for the work’s completion as identified in Kwon’s analysis of site-specific works, I considered how the viewer might feel when in the installation space. I wanted the installation space to be welcoming, to offer a variety of options for the viewer to spend time with the work, so I considered possibilities for seating in the space. I looked at artists who made seating for their exhibitions, and an example that seems most relevant was Mary Heilmann who often hand makes chairs to include in her exhibitions (Fig. 12). As she explains in her own words

...I love to engage with art... to talk about it with other people... look at painting after painting and allow them to speak to me, as I silently but verbally or non-verbally talk with them, say things to them and to myself... when I have a show of my work I hope that the people there will do the same thing. That is why I’ve started to make the chairs³⁶

![Image of Mary Heilmann's installation](image)

Fig. 12. Mary Heilmann, *To Be Someone* (2007), installation view

Jim Isermann also makes furnishings as part of his installations. Describing his work, *The Untitled (Flower seating arrangement)*, (Fig. 13) Isermann says

This was the first gallery show where all the furniture functioned as gallery furniture, as opposed to me trying to make the gallery look like some type of domestic setting. Visitors would come in and sit down and look at the paintings.37

![Flowers installation view](image)

**Fig. 13.** Jim Isermann, *Flowers* (1985), installation view

Curator David Pagel describes Isermann's works as "begin[ning] with the simple demand that art increase the pleasure people take in their surroundings".38 I could have provided a readymade bench but I shared Heilmann and Isermann's views and instead I made six boxes, the size of milk crates often used as stools, painted with variations on the pattern, to serve as seats for viewers.

**Installation and Evaluation**

In February 2014 when I installed the work in the ANU School of Art Photomedia Teaching Space I was able to see the completed work for the first time to evaluate critically the strategies I had used.

On seeing the work I decided that it provided a good starting point from which to proceed with my research. The choice of gouache and paper for the works had been successful as

38 Ibid.
the colours in the work were rich and glowing. The medium-grain 300gsm watercolour paper with its slightly textured surface had allowed me to produce relatively smooth edges to the pattern with just enough irregularity to show that the work was hand painted. The surface of the paper also amplified the velvety texture of the gouache enforcing the tactility that is a distinguishing characteristic of any painting.

The decision to work with sheets of paper contributed to ideas I was exploring in my research. The use of a standard sheet size of paper as a module in the work reflecting the window panels had provided human scale to the large expanse of the curved wall. The grid established by the installation of the individual sheets provided a navigational reference to the lines of latitude and longitude used in mapping. And lastly visibility of the deckle edges of the paper also enforced the hand-painted nature of the work distinguishing it from a mass-produced image such as wallpaper or a billboard.

Considering my choice of pattern, I noted that the starry motif worked effectively with the curved surface of the wall giving a sense of enclosure and suggesting a vast domed sky, and establishing the strong relationship between the work and site that Kwon identified.

My use of variation in the background tone, while noticeable, did not provide a navigational tool but differences in tone and hue from sheet to sheet did add to the formal integrity of the modular work setting it apart from the evenly-coloured printed pattern of wall paper. I judged that the use of negative space created by pattern omission had introduced an element of the unexpected, similar to that identified by that Dodgson, into the work. The negative space also highlighted sub-motifs and suggested pathways through the work.

Considering the seats, I decided that they were not entirely successful as they read instead as sculptural elements rather than seats. Furthermore, they interfered with viewer’s engagement with the work on the wall. To be successful I would need to have made structures more readily identifiable as chairs as the use of pattern signified the boxes as artworks. The blocks or cubes, which is how the seats read, pulled the pattern from the wall and distracted from the viewers visual and bodily experience of the curved wall.
However these forms did mark a shift in my practice with the extension of painted surface to three-dimensional and handmade objects.

*Navigating by the Stars* had opened up several areas of enquiry that I would continue to pursue in my Master's research. I had used a standard sheet of paper as a modular support. Modular supports were to become a tool for extending pictorial space that I used throughout my project. I had extended the painted surface onto three-dimensional objects and I had begun to consider the viewer's emotional response to the installation space by trying to make it a place in which they would spend time.

**Conclusion**

In response to my research question, I found that by expanding the pictorial space to a large-scale work modular work installed in response to the architectural features of the site, the work extended beyond its internal formal elements to include the specificity of the installation site. Beyond that, in these early stages of my project, my theoretical research led to an understanding of how we use pattern and how an open-ended exchange can be established between artist and viewer. I identified the painting devices that I would use to investigate this reflexivity.

Before beginning the project my practice had a strong intuitive component, based on tacit knowledge, material knowing and subjective evaluation. I began reflecting on my work during the course of my project, trying to establish some critical distance. This entailed a process of making and evaluating that Ross Gibson describes as stepping inside and outside the system almost simultaneously. Putting myself outside the system led to some ‘understanding of the ultimately imponderable working of (my) system’s complexity’. This understanding resulted in my being more aware of how I might use my now articulated language of painting in my enquiry as I will continue to describe throughout this exegesis.

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40 Ibid.
Chapter Two: Beyond the Wall

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss how I continued my investigation of installation through a series of exhibitions where I experimented with painting on cut and folded paper and on tessellated plywood forms. The work I will discuss here was developed during what I consider to be the middle point of my practice-led project. During this time my intention in exhibiting my work was to test installation strategies in order to see more clearly where my practice-led research was headed.

In moving from making paintings as discrete objects to making works for installation in specific spaces I needed to define what extended pictorial space and site might be in the context of my project. Reflecting on Navigating by the Stars I began to question how, apart from using paper as a surface for paint, could I exploit its materiality to extend pictorial space into the third dimension? And what would be the sensations generated if I made painted works for the installation on the floor? In this chapter I discuss how my studio investigations continued in response to these questions and how I proceeded from investigating pattern as a tool for navigating and establishing scale to looking at its use to create affect and evoke memory. Finally, I discuss the work produced during this period, describing my installation processes and critically reflecting on each body of work exhibited.

During this period my research was informed by two field trips to Spain and Germany to research pattern in architecture and to contextualise my work by examining the way other artists used the wall and exhibition space. I will discuss how these trips opened up new areas of exploration that I pursued in my next works. After visiting Spain I made works where I used pattern and colour to recall my experiences there. I extended my investigations into the materiality of paper and painting in three-dimensional space and used illusion as a means to extend pictorial space. Following the trip to Berlin I considered how artists created particular affects within the white cube gallery space by working with pattern, scale surface and display. I argue that in doing this they claim the space as their territory in much the same way as we use pattern and decoration to personalise our own homes. I will discuss this further in relation to my work in Chapter Three.
Extended Pictorial Space

Throughout this project extended pictorial space refers to the surface beyond the boundaries of a conventional painting. In my research question I asked what happens when painting extends beyond the edges of a conventional rectilinear painting support. This then led me to question where the pictures edge might be. I had begun my investigation by making self-referential, autonomous objects of fixed dimensions that could be hung on any wall. In these works the edges of the painting surfaces delineated the two-dimensional pictorial space. Extending pictorial space, I determine this edge in relation to both the support I chose and the site in which it would be installed. The space may spread across the surface of the exhibition space on wall, ceiling or floor. It can extend from the wall into the gallery space and, across the surface of three-dimensional objects responding to the physical attributes of the site: the dimensions, architectural elements, light and surface characteristics. The installation site can become the pictorial space.

Site

The site of my works during my project was to be the gallery space in which they were installed. However as discussed in Chapter One when I referred to historian Miwon Kwon's three paradigms for site specificity, site can refer to more than just the physical location of an artwork. While my works were created in the studio, they were installed in the response to physical attributes of the site. I considered the installation process to be part of the making of the works. Because the works, especially those based on modular units could be installed differently in each exhibition space I define them as site-responsive. Kwon uses this term to define works that can be installed in more than one location and to distinguish them from site-specific works of the 1960s and 1970s where artists insisted the work ceased to exist if it was moved from its original site of installation. As discussed in Chapter One, Navigating by the Stars fits with Kwon's first paradigm in which there is an indivisible relationship between the work and its site demanding the presence of the viewer for its completion. Throughout the course of the project, as my work developed, it came to fit within the overlapping definitions of Kwon's three paradigms and I will discuss this with reference to individual works.

41 See Esrefoglu 1&2 (Figs 4 and 5) Chapter One.
42 Kwon, One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity, 1.
43 Kwon, One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity, 12.
The Field Trip to Spain

After completing *Navigating by the Stars*, I went on a field trip to Spain to revisit the places where I had first become interested in pattern. During my trip I found that there was much more to my experience than the direct observation of pattern. I was interested in the transformational effects of light on architectural surfaces and the way that pattern was experienced as I moved through the richly decorated buildings.

In Barcelona I visited Antonio Gaudí’s apartment building *La Pedrera* built between 1906 and 1912. Gaudí conceived the building as the body of an animal with the load-bearing columns being the bone and the façade the skin.\(^4^4\) It was the richly textured and ornamented skin that interested me as I observed the play of light and the shadow on its surface (Figs 14 and 15). From Barcelona I went on to study the Moorish architecture of Seville, Cordoba and Granada. The trip finished with a two-week residency at Joya Arte + Ecologica, Cortijada Los Gasquez in Velez Blanco\(^4^5\) where I reflected on my research and made some small gouache on paper works based on the light, landscape and patterns I had observed (Figs 16 to 21).

While in Spain I was mesmerised by the elaborate tessellated tile surfaces. I was also drawn to the effects caused by shadows on *La Pedrera*, Gaudi’s apartment building in Barcelona. I observed the colours and tonal contrasts created by sunlight and shadow in the harsh, high altitude desert landscape at Los Gasquez.

When considering how I might evoke these experiences in painting, the writings of Bridget Riley and Mary Heilmann were relevant. Riley sees the artist’s work as reacquainting the viewer with the visual revelations of childhood that momentarily turn the commonplace into the ravishing, stating that she paints to make visible not what we actually see, but ‘the essence of vision… which sight throws from our innermost heart’.\(^4^6\) Writing about her own work, Heilmann states

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\(^{4^5}\) ‘Joya Arte + Ecologica’.
Each of my paintings can be seen as an autobiographical marker, a cue by which I evoke a moment from my past, or my projected future, each as a charm to conjure a mental reality and to give it physical form.\textsuperscript{47}

It is this optical and embodied response that I hoped to engage in the body of work that drew on memories from my Spanish trip. These works are a series of cut paper and three-dimensional works based on my observations of colour, light and shadow, which I will now discuss.

\textbf{Fig. 14.} Floor detail, \textit{La Pedrera}

\textbf{Fig. 15.} Roof Element, \textit{La Pedrera}

\textsuperscript{47}Hyperallergic, John Yau, 'Mary Heilmann Invites Us to Join Her in Arcadia’ \url{http://hyperallergic.com/?s=mary+heilmann}, Accessed November 2015.
**Fig. 16.** Native flora, Los Gasquez  
42 x 29.7 cm

**Fig. 17.** *Untitled*, gouache on paper,

**Fig. 18.** Buildings, Los Gasquez

**Fig. 19.** *Untitled*, gouache on paper,
42 x 29.7 cm

**Fig. 20.** Buildings, Los Gasquez

**Fig. 21.** *Untitled*, gouache on paper, 42 x 59.4 cm
**Cut Paper Works**

In my next works I established a device to extend the pictorial surface into the third dimension and began to work with multiple layers of paper in each work. After using paper as a two-dimensional support in *Navigating by the Stars*, I wanted to see how I could use the materiality of paper as well as painted pattern to explore ideas of light and shadow. A key question driving my research was apart from using paper as a surface for paint, how could I exploit its materiality to extend pictorial space into the third dimension? How could I use paper's ability to be folded to create a third dimension and a further tactile element in a work?

Recalling the façade of La Pedrera, (Fig. 22), I made works using 2 layers of paper where the top layer was cut and folded to reveal its back and the layer beneath. My first works were painted with a warm grey for the top layer and a tonally similar but contrasting colour on the back of the top layer and on the layer underneath. I rolled the cut paper back to reveal the underlying sheet. Evaluating these works I concluded that the irregularities produced by the rolling technique resulted in an activated shimmering surface that recalled the effects of light and shade I had experienced in Spain (Figs 23 and 24). The device of cutting and folding the paper extended the painting from the wall into the gallery space and was a technique that I would explore further experimenting with different colours and tonal variation.

![Image of La Pedrera façade](image)

**Fig. 22.** Façade, *La Pedrera*
In the next body of work, pink flick, my aim was to reflect that intensity of light and shadow I observed at Los Gasquez. The clear late autumn light and the bare chalky fields created a bleached background where any trace of colour became almost fluorescent in contrast. At dawn and dusk, the stone buildings picked up the pinks blues and golds of the sun and sky and the edges of surfaces and shadows became crisp and sharp often subverting my perception of the building’s true form. With this in mind I decided to use a mixture of pastel and fluorescent paints on cut and folded paper to capture these sensations of light on three-dimensional forms.

I made these works using the two-layered format I described above. In the first work Pink Flick I painted the underside of the top layer with fluorescent orange/red paint to use reflected colour as part of the pattern. Instead of rolling the cut paper, as I had in Red Flick, I folded it, allowing the sharper random angles of the folds to set up movement and shimmer across the picture surface. The crisp edges and points of the cut paper reflected the sharp edges I had seen (Figs 25 and 26). The fluorescent colour and its reflection together with irregularities in the folds of paper created a shimming sensation and together with the sharpness of form better recalled my observations of light and pattern in Spain than Red Flick. Using modular sheets, I was able to create a crenulated edge to the work to suggest the possibility of adding to and extending the work further with the addition of more modules.

Pink Flick is the individual work (Fig. 25) and pink flick is the title of the body of work exhibited in the exhibition at Factory 49 in May 2014.
Fig. 25. *Pink Flick* (2014), Flashe vinyl on paper, 180 x 280 cm
I made *Lemon Flick 1 & 2* (Fig. 27) using fluorescent yellow on the underside of the top sheet. In these works I set out to test whether similar effects to those in *Pink Flick* could be achieved with a softer palette. I used different levels of folding to add irregularities and movement to the patterns. In addition, I painted the undersides of the folded paper darker to suggest shadow.

In these cut paper works I extended the pictorial surface into the third dimension and began to work with multiple layering. Later in my project I continued to explore the expressive potential of layering to express other aspects of pattern as I will discuss in the next chapter.
Fig. 28. Tumble (2014), Flashe vinyl on ply, dimensions variable

Fig. 29. Tumble (2014), detail
The second question I posed at the beginning of this chapter was how could I make painted patterns works to be installed on the floor? I started by making a series of three-dimensional objects that explored the effects of light and shadow. At Los Gasquez I had observed how the colour of stone walls changed according to whether they were in sunlight or shadow noting the sharp contrast that occurred. To evoke this I painted a mix of solid and hollow cubes with shapes and slivers of fluorescent colour to interfere with the perception of the solid forms (Figs 28 and 29). I also painted some smaller wall mounted boxes and used tone and colour to set up conflicting readings of edge, and used the interplay of shadow with fluorescent glow to suggest the works were emerging from the wall surface into the gallery space (Fig. 30).

The floor provided another surface for the extension of pictorial space and many of the patterns from which I take inspiration occur on floors as tessellated tiles. The artists Jim Lambie (Fig. 31), Dominic Pétrin (Fig. 32) and Joyce Kozloff (Fig. 33) have all extended pattern onto the floor as part of their installation using the pattern to reinforce, overwhelm or obliterate the installation space. I wanted to use the floor as the surface for patterns made in response to my experiences. In Spain I observed the effects that light, the irregular surface and glaze had on my perception of the patterns on the tiled floors and walls of Moorish buildings, noting how these phenomena created a shifting active surface.

Fig. 32. Dominique Pétrin, *Gala,Arprim, Regroupement pour l’art imprimé* (2012), silkscreened paper installation
Jim Lambie uses a high gloss surface to reflect light from his floor installation. However my choice of matt paint for all the works in the series *pink flick* led to new challenges when I made the next work, which was to be exhibited on the floor. I prefer to use matte paints as they allow the characteristics of individual colours to create optical effects. When the surface of the painting is uniformly glossy these effects are masked because of the even reflection of light from the painted surface and disruptions caused by reflections of the surroundings. The reflections bounce back pushing the viewer away from the surface of the work.

I shifted my approach to make flat work to be placed on the floor similar to the works of Lambie, Kozloff and Pétrin. The first work, *Limelight* (Fig. 34), explored the directional effects of light and the perspectival effects as the pattern receded from the viewer, visual phenomena I had observed in El Alhambra in Spain. I made a two-panelled work to be installed on the floor using yellow and pink of similar luminance to create a constant sensation of flicker, an effect similar to the play of light on unevenly glossy surfaces of tiled floors. In this work I investigated how I could create a sense of luminosity to reflect my observations of light on tiled surface when working with matt paint. I chose to use colour to achieve my aim.

Colours with no tonal or brightness contrast are described as isoluminant. Neuropsychologist Richard Gregory investigated the effect of using isoluminant colours in
adjacent pattern elements.\textsuperscript{49} When he did this he found that stereoscopic vision and depth perception and the establishment of foreground/background disappear creating an instability that he describes as a ‘jazzing effect’ as the eye searches for the contour between adjacent pattern elements.\textsuperscript{50} Using Gregory’s findings provided the methodology for creating the optical effects I was searching for (Fig. 34).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{limelight_image}
\caption{Limelight (2014), Flashe vinyl on birch panel, 91 x 182 cm}
\end{figure}

I installed \textit{pink flick} at Factory 49 to assess these works and to consider how my studio investigation might proceed.\textsuperscript{51} Factory 49 is an artist-run space housed in a converted factory space in Marrickville, Sydney. During the day the gallery space is filled with natural light from skylight in the roof and at night the area is evenly lit. The changes in light conditions and their effects on the perceptions of the works were an essential part of the installation as they reflected my observations in Spain that I was expressing in the works. I used the two larger walls to exhibit the cut paper works and placed \textit{Flick Studies} on the smaller wall (Figs 35 and 36) and \textit{Tumble} and \textit{Limelight} on the floor.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 19.
Making, exhibiting and testing the works allowed me to experiment with colour, pattern, material and form. This led to the development of new ways of exploring painted pattern in extended pictorial space as I continued my research. Evaluating the exhibition, I came to the following conclusions. Reflecting on the two-layered cut paper works led me to identify edge and overlaying as two areas for exploration in further works. In the wall work *Pink Flick*, which shared the exhibitions title, I had created a crenulated, uneven edge with the installation of the modular sheets. This edge opened the work to multiple readings; firstly as an indicator of hierarchy in the case of the wall-mounted work that had
a similar format to painted altarpieces and secondly as a fragment to which more modules could be attached. This led me to consider how I might use edge in the installation of modular works. I also questioned how I might use overlaying of patterns to express other associative aspects of pattern in my investigations. I will discuss the development of this idea in later works in Chapter Three.

While the exhibition had a coherence resulting from a consistency of colour and form, I judged that there was too much happening in the space for it to work successfully as an installation. Each individual work required more space for the viewer to engage with it from multiple viewpoints and experience the resulting differences in light and shadow that I thought were integral to the body of works. While I had hung and positioned the work carefully to respond to changing light conditions throughout the day there was no responsivity to the architecture of site. These were issues that I would address in my next works.

The Field Trip to Berlin

After my exhibition pink flick I went to Berlin to continue my field research. The main focus of my trip was to visit Wall Works an exhibition at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum that dealt with contemporary painters and installation artists making site-specific works using the wall as visual support and space-defining element. During my trip I also experienced Crash Pad, an installation by the Greek architect Andreas Angelidakis that included Ottoman textiles and designs. Continuing my research into the effects of colour and light that I had begun in Spain I visited the Bauhaus at Dessau to see the Walter Gropius school buildings and masters’ houses.

At the Wall Works exhibition, I examined how the artists worked with painting and other media and how they created affect in the neutral exhibition space. One of the exhibition’s curators, Uta Caspary describes how in essence the wall, pictorial space and architectural

52 ‘Wall Works: An Overview of Artists’ Approaches to the Wall since the 1960s’.
space combine to create an entity in every work in the exhibition. This entity corresponded with the extended pictorial space I have described above so I was keen to examine the approach of other artists to installation in the extended space afforded by the white cube of the gallery space.

As *Navigating by the Stars* and *pink flick* used modular elements in installation I focused on the works of three artists who had taken a similar approach. Daniel Buren’s work *Unexpected Variable Configurations: A Work in Situ*, 1998 (Fig. 37) filled the rear wall of a three-sided exhibition with a gridded blue surface over which were installed tile modules with Buren's stripe pattern. The striped modules became a navigational tool causing the eye to move around the surface and provided a scale for relating to the vast work. They became foreground and the blue gridded area became negative space. I was interested to see a work where negative space predominated and became the pictorial surface delineating the works edges.

![Fig. 37. Daniel Buren, Unexpected Variable Configurations: A Work in Situ (1998)](image)

Peter Halley’s work, *Static Wallpaper*, 1998, used a series of coloured screen prints pasted directly to the wall in an order determined in response to the wall’s proportions (Fig. 38). My work, *Navigating by the Stars*, used similarly sized modules and it was interesting to observe how the installation worked when the sheets were clearly delineated by colour

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change rather than having a continuous pattern across them. Each sheet of the work read as an individual element breaking up the space, whereas in *Navigating by the Stars* there was a visual path across the entire work.

**Fig. 38.** Peter Halley, *Static Wallpaper* (1998)

Rosemarie Trockel used a knitted stocking stitch pattern printed directly onto the wall as a dado in modules determined by the size of the silk screen (Fig. 39). The dado broke the height of the gallery walls and together with the homely pattern referred to domestic
spaces. Trockel's stitches also provided a module for a temporal scale alluding to the time-consuming monotony of women's work.

These works raised questions of scale and the viewer's relationship to the exhibition space, themes I was investigating in my research. Looking at the works I have described I was able to see how material, form, mark and lighting could not only provide a visual and embodied experience and but also create affect or an emotional response in the viewer.

The works of Sarah Morris and Hanne Darboven in the exhibition also provided valuable insights into the use of material and placing of installation to create affect. Each artist created a different environment in the white cube gallery space. I argue that in doing this they claim the space, establish their territory, using pattern in a manner synonymous with the way the occupants use possessions to claim a space as home.

Sarah Morris's 1972 (*Rings*) resembled a billboard (Fig. 40). It was bold, glossy, and installed in a brightly lit space. Made with house paint the work was clearly visible from a distance with a design that did not demand close inspection. The work, which was similar a billboard in its size and use of bold imagery was part of the ongoing examination of urbanisation that is the basis of Morris's work. Since the mid-1990s, Morris has been making paintings and films, derived from close inspection of architectural details combined with a critical sensitivity to the psychology of cities to investigate what she describes as 'urban, social and bureaucratic typologies'.

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Nearby an excerpt from Hanne Darboven's work *Fin de Siècle. Book of Pictures*, reflecting the artist's personal concerns, was installed in a more enclosed space (Fig. 41). The room was filled with small photographs, pieces from books and journals and several museum cabinets displaying albums containing Darboven's notations of dates from 1988 to 1999. It seemed an immensely private space, the scene of a stored and ordered archive — quiet, obsessive and a bit creepy. Thinking back to the room I imagine it dimly lit even though I know it wasn’t. The work required the viewer to enter the space and look closely in contrast to Morris’s work where the brightness and gloss pushed the viewer away. Both these works used scale, surface, material and installation space to create affect, strategies that I could employ back in the studio.
The claiming of territory I had observed in Morris and Darboven’s installations was particularly manifest in an exhibition at the KW Institute in Berlin. *Crash Pad*, by Greek architect Andreas Angelidakis used rugs to reference Ottoman culture and columns to refer to European culture, the two ethnic systems existing in Greece since the 19th century (Fig. 42). I was aware that I was entering a territory occupied by the artist and that this area had been made hospitable by the richly patterned rugs that covered the surfaces. I reflected how different the experience of sitting in this richly patterned space was from sitting in a typical gallery space. I felt as though I was not in a public space and attributed this to the homely affect created by the use of patterned textiles. I questioned how I might create this association in my work without needing to make this kind of installation.

*Fig. 42. Andreas Angelidakis, Crash Pad (2014), KW Institute, Berlin*

*floored*

Investigating these works in the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum and the KW Institute allowed me to evaluate not only how I wanted my installations to look but also led me to consider how I might create affect in my installations. I wanted my spaces to be warm and hospitable, ideas I began to explore when I had made the seats for *Navigating by the Stars* (see Chapter One), but I realised that this also influenced my colour choices as did the role pattern played in memory. These were ideas that I explored in my next installations.
floored and Axis.

On my return I decided to make a work using triangular modular elements cut from ply and use a painted motif that was once again based on my hand span. The resulting work, floored, which would be much larger than Limelight (Fig. 34), was to be installed in the Canberra Contemporary Art Space Manuka Gallery.57

Once again my intention was to investigate the effects of light on pattern perception when the floor became the picture plane. I planned to make a work that occupied much of the gallery floor (Fig. 43), leaving space for the viewer to move around the work. This would allow the viewer to look down on the pattern rather than from a position where the work was centred at eye height and the viewer moved parallel to its surface, as is the case with wall-mounted works. Perspectival effects would be visible from all orientations as the viewer would be unable to centre their line of vision. The floor is lit by the overhead gallery lights and daylight flooding through the glass doors and windows at the bottom left of the plan (Fig. 43).

Fig. 43. Plan for installation at Canberra Contermporary Art Space Manuka

I wanted to reference the tessellated tiled patterns I had seen in El Alhambra and in churches while working with the materiality of paint to create a softer matt surface than that of polished stone or ceramic surfaces. The hatched area in Fig. 43 represents the approximate area of the work however I planned that the work would have irregular edges reflecting the shape of the ‘tiles’ rather than confining the work in the square format usually associated with a painting. The edge would allow the two readings; the first working centrifugally as a fragment of an infinite pattern and the second centripetally to lead the viewer back into the pattern.

The decision to work with tiles was also made for other reasons. Using a small modular unit gave opportunities to alter orientation of the units to give direction changes and illusionary effects within the work to engage the viewer with the navigational aspect of pattern. I could produce a work with a larger surface than I could display in my studio space and manipulate the size, shape and orientation of the work for site-specific installation.

I worked with colours I had observed when I made a day trip to the Bauhaus school in Dessau during my Berlin field trip. I observed that colour was used to delineate different areas and to create warm domestic spaces in the masters’ houses. I used some of these colours, (Figs. 44 & 45) in my palette of white, vermillion, cadmium yellow, cobalt blue, grey and cool pink. I subdivided the surfaces of some tiles into nine smaller equilateral triangles and left some monochrome. I began arranging the tiles in a roughly rectangular shape reminiscent of a carpet (Fig. 46). I was not happy with the result. The colours with their strong association with early modernist painters meant that the work read as reference or homage to Mondrian. The triangular pattern motif in the centre reminded me of a kilim rug. There was too much going on visually and associatively and the triangular supports were not really an integral part of the design.
Fig. 44. Bauhaus Interior, Dessau

Fig. 45. Bauhaus Interior, Dessau

Fig. 46. Initial tessellated floor work in progress
I began again working with the secondary and tertiary colours that had resulted from light and shade of the Bauhaus buildings. I used the same design on all the tiles to make a tessellated surface pattern based on a hexagon constructed from six equilateral triangles. (Fig.47)

![Tessellated surface pattern](image)

**Fig. 47. floored (2014), detail**

Installing the work in a site-responsive manner required taking account of the viewer’s physical path through the space and the internal workings of the pattern that would suggest visual paths for the viewer. I began by installing the work with a straight edge parallel with the back wall of the gallery space and allowing zigzag edges along the sides of the work. The result was a work that was chunky and looked a bit too small for the space. I thought more about the viewer’s relationship to the space and how they would orientate. Entering from the back left-hand corner of the space (Fig. 43) they looked towards the back wall. By switching the axis of the work to the diagonal I could lead viewers into the work as they entered the space and by lighting the back wall I hoped to draw their gaze across the pattern. Using the strategy identified by Dodgson as a way to create viewer interest in Bridget Riley’s work (see Chapter One), I disrupted the pattern by changing the orientation of a section of tiles in the middle of the work. My aim was to produce a cyclical movement of repose, disturbance, repose, which Riley identifies as the situation created in her black and white works from the same era as those in Dodgson’s research.\(^{58}\) I used the fish-tailed edge in the foreground of the work to suggest the tail of an arrow leading the

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viewer into the work. Changing the orientation of some of the tiles gave a sense of rotation to the pattern (Fig. 48).

![Fig. 48. floored (2014), acrylic on ply, dimensions variable, installation view](image)

The viewer's visual and bodily engagements are essential elements in an installation. The critic John Elderfield mentions the necessity of a beholder to make visible the rich associations inherent in Bridget Riley's work. He argues that the painting is 'an engine to create a way of looking', that the artist manufactures but that requires 'a beholder to turn it on and keep it running'. \(^{59}\) As I sat the gallery during the exhibition, I became the beholder and had the opportunity to watch others interact with the work. I will now describe these observations.

There was sufficient space for viewers to walk around the work and see the pattern shifts caused by change of orientation. When I stood at the gallery's entrance the central part of the pattern appeared lighter and seemed to lift above the rest of the work (Fig. 49). From the opposite end the grey elements of the pattern became more dominant creating distinct vertical and horizontal elements in the pattern (Fig. 50). At the point where the patterns changed the work appeared to 'flip' up. The visual phenomena were very different in areas where the viewer was forced to stand close and look down rather than across the work.

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**Fig. 49** floored (2014), installation view 2

**Fig. 50** floored (2014), installation view 3
The work met with a mixed response from the viewers. Some could not accept the floor as pictorial space and commented that there was nothing on the walls to see. I became aware that installation work that relied purely on the optical phenomena associated with pattern would not engage all viewers: that for some Elderfield’s engine remained turned off. However, I observed that those who engaged with the work took the time to move around the room navigating and responding to the effects of pattern disruption from different viewpoints and, commenting on the three-dimensional and perspectival effects of the work.

Spending more time with the work gave me the chance to reflect on the affect of the work. I have discussed earlier how I wanted to make my installation space welcoming to the viewer. One of the reasons I had wanted to install work in the Manuka Gallery was because it is a warm and intimate space. Ambient light makes the white walls warm rather than cool gallery white.

Considering the affect of the work brought back memories. I realised that the colours in the work were also those that had been in our kitchen when I was a child. In making the work I was not only trying to make visible the navigational and illusionary aspects of pattern but also use colour and pattern to create an affect of a warmth and security associated with domestic space.

*Axis*

*Floored* had provided the opportunity to test painted pattern as floor installation. *Axis* was my next work, and again I used the modules from *floored*, in order to see what would happen if I expanded the pictorial space from the floor back up the walls of the exhibition space.

The uneven edges of *floored* were meant to suggest continuation without containment and with the possibility for infinite organic growth. Arts writer and curator Marguerite Brown has discussed Emergent Theory where complex patterns emerge out of multiple simple interactions or the collective activities of many entities. She describes how such activities
give rise to the possibilities of mutations and changes that can introduce axes, rhythms and direction into repetitive grid based works.\textsuperscript{60} Reflecting on floored I considered how I could introduce more axes to provide navigational associations and rhythms through the placement of the triangular modules. These were the areas that I investigated when I installed the next iteration of the modular work as \textit{Axis} in the Wollongong Art Gallery.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{Axis} is made from several hundred more modular pieces and I installed the work across the floor and two walls of the gallery (Fig. 51). I will now describe my installation process. The room had a very similar floor plan to the exhibition space at Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Manuka, with the long side walls converging slightly towards the back of the room. I began by installing the tiles on the wall. I established the rear right corner as the focus point for the viewer who would enter from the front left-hand corner of the room. I used directional change in pattern to radiate from the right-hand corner, and left gaps using the negative space to provide further cues to possible ways to navigate through the pattern.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{axis_installation_view.jpg}
\caption{Axis, Installation view}
\end{figure}

I used the gaps and resulting fragments to suggest that the pattern might extend to infinity to be part of a pattern that once covered the entire wall. I set out to create a lightness and the possibility of entering the pattern as these were visual phenomenon I had experienced

\textsuperscript{61} Susan Buret, \textit{Axis}, Wollongong Art Gallery, 2015.
when looking at ancient pattern fragments. I had seen fragments of an Algerian panel displayed in the Louvre with the full pattern suggested by finely drawn lines (Fig. 52). I found the fragment offered greater scope for engagement than the fully patterned walls I had seen at El Alhambra (Fig. 53). By breaking and redirecting the pattern, I suggested orienting strategies to the viewer as they moved throughout the room.

**Fig. 52.** Wall panel fragment from Sedrata, Algeria c. 908, Louvre, Paris

I placed the floor tiles in a similar manner to way they had been placed in floored except that I took them up to the right corner of the rear wall to join the wall pattern and to
create a sense of explosion of the pattern originating from that point. The small timber bead around the edge of the floor together with the equilateral triangular form of the tiles meant that running the tiles directly from the floor up the wall was not possible. As the floor was dark timber I did not leave any gaps in the floor tiling as I decided that they would be too strong a disruption to the pattern.

With the installation of Axis, I was claiming space in a similar manner to the nomadic tribes who set up camp with their patterned textiles. I was suggesting a mode of habitation, a way to interact with the architectural space in the same way we do when we arrange furniture and establish the function of a room. My actions paralleled actions that architectural theorist Sophie Handler describes as a pattern of feminine-domestic construction—‘a productive mode of doing that proceeds, paradoxically, through a repeating pattern of undoing, over-doing and re-doing’.62 This process formed part of my studio practice where motifs are first drafted on the grid and then omitted when the pattern is painted. The process occurs again in the act of exhibiting installations where several rearrangements often occurred before I settled on a final arrangement of tiles. And, as I will discuss in the next Chapter, it occurs again in the later part of my project where I worked with textiles and paint.

Reflecting on Axis I realised that the strong contrast between wall and floor had a considerable bearing on the reading of the pattern and I will now discuss this and other observations in my evaluation of the work. Once again I had chosen a warm and intimate exhibition space to install the work and while I considered that the dark polished floor added to its affect, I found the contrast between wall and floor disrupted the rhythms and flow of the pattern that I had hoped to establish. I concluded that this could be better achieved if I had used square or right-angled triangular tiles and removed the floor bead to create a smooth interface between wall and floor. This would have allowed me to set up strong axes through the work. Using the rear right corner as the focal point of the pattern worked with the perspectival distortion of the pattern to create a sense of explosion from the patterns source. This reading was reinforced by the fragmentation of the wall pattern. I considered that the fragmentation of pattern had been a successful technique that I would explore further during my investigation.

Conclusion

After completing my early work _Navigating by the Stars_, my field research marked a broadening of my studio investigations from examining the visual and spatial effects of pattern. With reference to my research question I found that by extending pictorial space I was able to explore affect through the use of colour and the arrangement of elements in the exhibition space. I was also able to investigate the claiming of exhibition space as personal territory in my installations.

Researching the use of pattern in architecture in Spain enabled me to articulate the aspects of colour and light in relation to architectural form that I wanted to explore in my painting. In Berlin I researched the work of artists who were concerned with the visual and bodily relationship with space (Daniel Buren, Peter Halley, Rosemarie Trocken) as well as those who used space to create affect (Hanne Darboven and Sarah Morris) and those whose work was concerned with social and political issues (Sarah Morris and Andreas Angelidakis). This led to new questions about the affect I was creating with my works and the aspects of pattern association I was exploring through this affect. _Floored_ and _Axis_ were made to investigate use of pattern as a navigational tool but they also used colour and pattern to explore the associations that pattern has with home and memory. The social, political and domestic aspects of pattern were issues that I went on to examine in the next part of my project and I will discuss these in the next chapter.
Chapter Three: Claiming Territory

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the three bodies of work developed in the final part of my project. These works were concerned with last two associative aspects of pattern that I outlined in the introduction: the ability of pattern to order and store information and to claim territory. In this chapter I will discuss how these works were informed by reflection on my earlier installations and researching other artists.

My next work Nebula addressed how we use the visual imagery of pattern in cognitive processes to order and store information. I tested overlaying and colour variation across the work to introduce the dimension of time as an extension of pictorial space.

In the second body of works I used modular supports similar to those in floored and Axis. I experimented with colour and tone, the relationship between pattern and support and the placement of modules to continue the exploration of new ways of extending pictorial space I had begun in the wall installation of Axis. This time I worked on a smaller scale to investigate new means of extending beyond the confines of traditional painting to interact with the installation space. By using gaps in my modular installation, I was able to include the wall as part of the work.

In the third body of work I used painting and embroidery to investigate the proposition I began to consider in Chapter Two: that the installation artist claims space as territory. By introducing these themes I was extending my installation practice into the area described in Kwon’s third paradigm where social and political issues are considered. As I had extended my work to include embroidery as well as painting, I will argue that the two media, rather than being simply different ways of expressing the same image, led to new insights and processes in my painting practice. In supporting my argument I will refer to the continuing history of artists who have worked across the two media in the field of pattern and geometric abstraction.
In *Nebula*, I wanted to create a work that would express the way I use the mental imagery of patterns and grids, similar to those seen in logic diagrams, as an aid to learning, understanding and memory. As I learn new information I build up layers to overwrite and reconfigure my stored knowledge and I decided that layering in the work could reflect this. It seemed to me that the knowledge we hold in our brain has a nebulous and highly mutable form and that is why I chose *Nebula* as the title for the work.

I researched the etymology of the word nebula. I concluded that overlaying could also be used to express the accumulation of knowledge over a considerable period of time resulting in changes to the meaning of words. Nebula is the Latin word for mist, fog or cloud. Between the fifth and eighth centuries it was used to describe medical conditions including a cloudy suspension in a urine sample and a film over the eye. With the development of the science of astronomy the 18th century definition of nebula became:

> an indistinct cloud-like, luminous object seen in the night sky, such as a cluster of distant stars, a galaxy, or a cloud of gas or dust. Now (usually): spec. a mass of gas or dust within a galaxy, typically visible either as a luminous patch or as a dark silhouette against a brighter background.\(^63\)

Today the word’s meaning has been extended and overlaid over time as scientific instruments have become more powerful and new discoveries are made. A nebula is now an interstellar cloud in outer space that is made up of dust, hydrogen and helium gas and plasma nebulae. Nebulae are classified as emission nebulae, found in disks of spiral galaxies where new stars form and reflection nebulae that reflect light from nearby stars.\(^64\)

I wanted to reflect the non-material nature of thought and ideas and decided that would require a different approach to form and material. I decided that the edges of pattern motifs should be less clearly defined and that there should be variation of paint opacity. This was to capture the qualities of information stored in the brain that I described above. The nebulous delivery of spray paint through a stencil achieved this end (Fig. 54).


In *Nebula* the grid formed the armature for a simple pattern of triangles. The work was painted on modules of A3 watercolour paper that could be installed in various formats to reflect this continuous overlaying. Once again I used isoluminant colours to activate the painted surface. This time I used blue-grey and yellow and varied the tone of background blue-grey. This shifting of ground cover was to reinforce the temporal nature of the building and overlaying of information. I painted the underside of each sheet yellow to reinforce the idea that each sheet was a separate entity in three-dimensional space. Each sheet was attached at the top so that the underlying or earlier pattern could still be accessed.

![Nebula artwork detail](image)

**Fig. 54.** *Nebula* (2014), acrylic on paper, detail

I installed the work at Sawtooth ARI in Launceston across one gallery wall and wrapping around a corner to a second wall (Fig. 55). In this space I needed to respond to constraints imposed by fixtures. Electrical fixtures and exposed structural elements meant that there was some disruption to the float and flow of the work and this reflected the cognitive process of storing and organising new information within the structure of pre-existing information.

Reflecting on the works installed at Sawtooth, I identified shifts in my installation and material practice. Firstly, as mentioned above, I had moved from investigating the purely phenomenological aspects of pattern to investigating how I could use painting as a
metaphor for other ways in which we use it. Secondly, I had moved from making 'hard-edged' paintings of pattern and had begun to use variation of opacity. Thirdly I had introduced a different manner of layering as a way of extending the pictorial surface and creating a series of overlapping edges. These shifts opened my painting practice to new means of expression. I had found a metaphorical means of expressing the inherent qualities of pattern. With respect to the viewer, the more provisional approach to form and installation invited speculation as to why the sheets overlap and why the colours vary.

Fig. 5. Nebula(2014), installation view

Experimenting with Scale

In my next works I continued my exploration of edge by painting on modular tessellated forms to make a smaller wall work with triangular tessellations and two works using cross-shaped modular supports measuring 15 cm by 15 cm. I was curious to test ways of extending pictorial space through smaller scale installations of modular pieces. I decided to make three works where I tested the effects of colour, tone, the relationship of the motif to the modular shape and the use of different shaped modules in one work.
In *Whirl* (Fig. 56), I painted the centre of triangular tiles, similar to those used in *Axis*, a very dark brown and used a composition that extended to the apex of each the triangle. In my previous tessellated works, *floored and Axis*, the centres of the tiles were red and jostled with the other high-toned pattern elements that all project forward. In *Whirl* the darker centres receded and caused a sensation of spinning around an axis at the intersection of each group of six tiles. Internal configuration and tonality along with configuration of modules can result in a weight that prevents the perception of extending beyond the physical confines of the work. The composition then had a very strong spiralling internal dynamic. With this in mind I installed the tiles in a meandering horizontal pattern on the wall. I made this decision because I felt that if I had installed it in a more solid configuration it would have overwhelmed and excluded the viewer because the pattern worked in a centrifugal manner.

Next I investigated techniques for extending pictorial space through interaction of module, motifs and surface edge when working on a smaller scale. I made three works using cross-shaped modules on which I painted geometric designs with strong diagonal elements that were in conflict with the vertical and horizontal format of the modules. These modules could be installed in a number of ways to create different patterns.

In the first work, *Summer of Butterflies*, I reversed the colours of two pattern elements to create a pattern shift across the work (Fig. 57). In this work I had used colour as a device
to establish left/right orientation as I had done in *Navigating by the Stars*. Evaluating the work I believed that the strategy was much more successful using stronger tonal contrasts on a smaller scale. While not occupying a large area of the installation space the uneven edge and the dark star motif created a centrifugal force that pulled the space into the work.

![Image of Summer of Butterflies](image)

*Fig. 57. Summer of Butterflies* (2015), Flashe vinyl on MDF, 65 x 130 cm approx.

In the second work, *Monarch*, I wanted to see how patterns could be varied by the introduction of a second tile shape and by leaving gaps of a similar size to the second tile so that the wall became an element in the design. I used cross-shaped and square tiles. I installed this work firstly on a white wall where the wall integrated into the pictorial surface. I was interested to see what effect installing the modules on a different surface would have and whether the wall would still be integrated into the work. I installed the modules as two separate works on a rough brick wall and observed that the works with their smooth surfaces and bright hues floated above the wall surface (Figs 57 and 58).

The two different configurations also provided very different readings of pattern. In Fig. 58 there was a strong three-dimensional reading and activation caused by the conflict between the pale violet and orange to become foreground and the receding deep purple. In the second configuration, against a brick wall, the high-toned stars rotate and the work appears to float (Fig. 59).
In my final works in the project I worked with painting and embroidery to explore the use of pattern to demark and claim territory. I focused on the territory of domestic space continuing with the theme of pattern that evoked memories of the kitchen in my childhood home that I had touched on when discussing *floored.*
I will begin by explaining how I came to use embroidery in my investigations. Practice-led research doesn’t proceed in an orderly and predictable manner. My studio is a space bounded by highly permeable walls allowing the visual, social, political and personal experiences of my daily life to seep in and effect my research.

During the evening I was making a needlepoint work to cover a stool. I hadn’t done any needlework for many years and I was surprised at how much I enjoyed it. I became aware that I was working with the grid as I did when I painted and this was possibly why I found the work so engaging. Instead of drawing the grid on the substrate the canvas grid was the substrate that I sewed into with a repetitive action similar to that of laying down of paint. The only difference being that I pieced the surface and engaged with the back of the substrate when I embroidered.

I decided to make some embroidered works to include in my practice. This seemed pertinent to my project for two reasons. Firstly, I had initially been drawn to geometric pattern through my love of oriental carpets and textiles and the warp and weft of these determined the form of their motifs. Secondly I had observed how the use of textiles in the Angelidakis installation Crash Pad had introduced a reference to domestic space that I wanted to explore in my next works.

My first embroidery works were studies to investigate material limitations when embroidering geometric forms. I began by making small long stitch works using geometric patterns similar to those I painted. Initially I covered the whole surface with pattern (Fig. 60) then I went on to experiment with using pattern fragments and negative space (Fig. 61). This led me to question whether I was making embroidered pictures—were the works a mediation of my medium of painting? Art Historian T’ai Smith has argued that each medium’s identity was never purely material or formal but emerged as distinct when encoded by written text.65 In my studio investigations I found that, though there was the shared imagery of pattern, the specificities of form and colour in the media of painting and embroidery meant that the individual works were peculiar to their medium. I would argue that rather than being mediations the works were individual investigations into the nature

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of materials and geometric pattern. When discussing Melinda Harper’s embroideries curator Sue Cramer makes the point that the peculiarities of the textile medium lead to different formal discoveries than when Harper paints on canvas. I experienced similar discoveries through my embroidered works as I will discuss in relation to the Lumen series, the last works in my project.

Fig. 60. Lepidoptera#6, left, Lepidoptera #10 right (2014-2015), wool on embroidery mesh.

Fig. 61. Lepidoptera#3, left Lepidoptera#1, right (2015), wool on embroidery mesh.

This relationship between the process of embroidery and that of painting was to have implications for the way I would work with each medium and it was informative to

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examine the history of cross-referencing of imagery and colour across the two media in the practice of other artists.

In the early part of the 20th century the artists Sophie Tauber-Arp, Sonia Delaunay and Anni Albers investigated pattern and geometry through painting and textiles producing significant bodies of work in each medium. It was Anni Albers who T’ai Smith credits with writing the texts that established the medium of textiles as an independent entity. Albers discussed the designing of textiles as visual organisation stating, “designing... if done imaginatively and sensitively... can become art”. Both Tauber-Arp and Delaunay worked with vibrant palettes in their paintings that reflected the rich colour of textile dyes and so I would argue that rather than making textiles pictures, textiles informed their painted works.

Two contemporary artists, Michelle Grabner and the Australian artist Melinda Harper, who integrate textile making into their practice, were valuable references as they provided a context for the extension of the studio practice into leisure hours through the making of embroidered works. They have both discussed making works, reliant on repetition, as part of their studio practice and I could relate this to my mode of enquiry. Grabner, whose work is concerned with the relation of art to politics of everyday life, makes works based on textiles such as dishcloths and blankets, and creates paper weavings (Fig. 62). Discussing these works Grabner sees them as reflecting the predictability of the domestic but more importantly being about process. Harper works with colour and geometry to make oil paintings and embroideries (Fig. 63). She embroiders at night while watching TV, gaining solace from the fact that she can combine relaxation with making work. These two artists were of particular interest as initially it was the process of making textile works that engaged me. Like Harper I was also drawn to creating these works as I could make them while relaxing at night and like Grabner I intend the works to evoke the domestic.

Fig. 62. Michelle Grabner, *Granny Square Afghan* (1996), enamel on panel, 32 × 39 inches

Fig. 63. Melinda Harper, *Untitled* (2009), spray and oil paint, embroidery thread, 42 × 40.5cm
Pattern and Territory

The act of extending pictorial space through the application of pattern to include the whole installation space establishes the particular space as separate from its surroundings. In my next works I combined embroidery and painting to address the inherent capacity of pattern to identify and delineate territory. In Berlin I began considering the domestic associations of pattern and had noted the affect produced when Angelidakis covered the surfaces of his Crash Pad installation with Ottoman rugs. I argue that when we add pattern to our home environment in the form of wallpaper, soft furnishings and so on, we are making claim to our territory. An empty interior gives no indication of who owns the property so when we add our possessions we claim the space. This action is similar to that of nomadic tribes who carry their patterns with them in the form of rugs and use them to claim a domestic territory when they set up camp. Jesus Bermudez Lopez, a specialist in Islamic Art and Archaeology, asserts that the elaborate interiors of El Alhambra are rooted in the jaima the nomads’ desert tent and cradle of Arab civilisation. He describes how ‘when you enter the patio, all your senses are captured by a profusion of colors, scents, light, and imagination and the outside world is excluded.’ So in my next body of work I wanted to explore ways of suggesting this sense of refuge and exclusion.

This idea of exclusion can be seen in many modern Western domestic interiors. In the last two decades digital communications and social media have invaded our domestic space. The walls of home no longer exclude work and outside pressures. There has been recent resurgence in the popularity of geometric pattern in soft furnishings and floor coverings with the Australian design website houzz.com listing 49 recent stories in which geometric décor is mentioned. This led me to question whether there is a correlation between these events? Do we surround ourselves with imagery of the understanding of natural order as an antidote to constant electronic intrusions? Is this why I continue to find such delight in my patterned environment? In my installations I not only set out to communicate my pleasure but by extending the pictorial space to include the exhibition space I endeavour to create a sense of being physically within the entity of the work to the exclusion of outside. This could not be achieved through the means of conventional painting.

Many contemporary artists use pattern to reference ideas about domestic space and also to engage with socio-political issues such as homelessness and poverty. Of particular relevance to my project were Nobukho Nqaba, Dominique Pétrin and Javier de Ribera, to whom I referred when researching the use of pattern to evoke ideas of domestic space.

For all three artists, the pattern is used to delineate a place of habitation thus excluding the outside. For Nqaba and de Riba the inherent quality of pattern is to encode memories of home and ethnicity. As I set out on my next body of work these ideas influenced my studio investigation.

Nobukho Nqaba is a South African artist who photographs installations made from woven plastic bags with their distinctive checked pattern (Fig. 64). These bags have become global symbols of immigration and go by names with derogatory connotations in several countries: ‘the “Ghana must go home” bag in Nigeria, Bangladeshi bag in the UK, Turkish bag in Germany, Mexican bag in the US and Guyanese Samsonite in the Caribbean’. For me these bags have an instant association with homely possessions in transit—the modern equivalent of the nomad’s saddlebag. An installation with this pattern carries powerful messages of displacement. In 2007 the power of this pattern to evoke associations caused the luxury brand Louis Vuitton to produce a collection using this motif in a reverse rip-off to avenge the counterfeiting of their ubiquitous products (Fig. 65).75

Fig. 64. Nobukho Nqaba, *Umaskhenkethe Likhaya Lam*

Fig. 65. A model on the catwalk for Louis Vuitton Spring/Summer 2007
Canadian Artist Dominique Pètrin makes installations where she covers every surface with hand silk screen-printed pattern. Her interests converge towards producing altered states of consciousness and perception. In doing this she creates a paradox playing with patterns usual association with orientation and order. In 2014 she created *Chromatic Nuit Blanche Paris* at Quai d'Austerlitz. She used silkscreen-printed pattern to create a bedroom for the homeless laying down the pattern to delineate an area in much the same manner as nomadic tribes do when they camp for the night (Fig 66). In this work the clear delineation of pattern elements sets the space apart from the strongly gestural graffiti around it.

![Dominique Pètrin, Chambre à coucher SDF/ homeless bedroom (2014)](image)

**Fig. 66.** Dominique Pètrin, *Chambre à coucher SDF/ homeless bedroom* (2014)

Catalan artist, Javier de Riba, spray paints patterns from the hydraulic tiles seen in traditional Catalan homes onto the floors of derelict buildings and onto ramps in skate parks (Fig. 67). De Riba discusses the ability of pattern to evoke memories especially those associated with home;
It moves me to think that once upon a time, these floors harboured experiences and helped form a part of someone’s daily life, yet now finally rest forgotten.\textsuperscript{76}

In making his precise and beautiful works he restores the value the inhabitant’s once bestowed upon their homes when they covered their floors with pattern.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Javier de Riba, \textit{Floor patterns in abandoned places}, date unknown}
\end{figure}

My first textile works while giving me the opportunity to become familiar with the medium and its possibilities for creating geometric pattern, did not really address my research question. I decided that by leaving some of the canvas exposed and leaving an edge of the grid around the work I could open the work to more readings (Fig. 68). Being a third generation Australian of mixed Northern European descent I had no particular ethnic patterning to draw on, so I chose instead to work with simple geometric pattern using orange, an avant-garde colour used in domestic decoration during my youth.

I made a series of works using both painting and embroidery. Pinning needlework so that it overlapped the works on paper, I used the layering to create an extended pictorial space and also to express the application of pattern to provide comfort and identity in domestic space (Fig. 69). The process of embroidering led me to consider how I might overtly express the grid in my painting. Continuing the shift away from hard-edged motif that I began in *Nebula* I made paintings where the grid, integral to the tapestry works was visible. I drew the grid onto kraft paper and then painted elements of pattern with fluorescent acrylic paint. The transparent pigment often left brush marks. These kinds of gestures had irritated me when making *Navigating by the Stars*. However, I now found them acceptable because they reflected the unevenness occurring in stitched work where the individual tension of each stitch caused the yarn to reflect light in a different way.

Reflecting on the *Lumen* series, the material and process did emulate the process of using pattern to establish domestic territory. Through overlaying I was able to suggest the softening of domestic surfaces that occurs through the use of cloth covers and cushions. Two formal devices extended the pictorial beyond the edges of the supports. Leaving mesh exposed in the embroidered works introduced a three-dimensional element and a continuity of space through and around the works. Extending the horizontal lines on the right of each painted layer suggested a continuation and integration into the surrounding space.
Fig. 69. *Lumen 1 & 2* (2015), wool on embroidery mesh, pencil and acrylic on paper

**Conclusion**

In the final stages of my project I explored new materials and worked on a smaller scale to investigate my research question of what happens when painted pattern is extended beyond the confines of traditional painting. Working with colour and tone I found new ways to extend pattern into the installation space. By using gaps and overlays of modular painting surfaces, I was able to include the wall as part of the work and also to extend works off the wall into the three-dimensional exhibition space. I tested overlaying, colour variation and means of attachment to the wall across an individual work to introduce the dimension of time as an extension of pictorial space.
Conclusion

This project arose from my love of geometric pattern. I am enthralled by patterns from humble gingham fabric to the dazzling splendour of the Nasrid Palace of El Alhambra in Spain; I was keen to explore how I can express such encounters in painting. At the onset of the project I determined that this would require more than a conventional rectilinear painting. My experiences also entailed the observation of light and colour and my interaction with the spatial characteristics of the pattern's setting. Extending painting beyond its traditional rectilinear confines to respond to the space in which it was exhibited was the approach I chose. This gave rise to my research question—what happens when painted pattern moves from the confines of traditional painting into extended pictorial space? In answer to my research question I found that when painted pattern is released from its traditional two-dimensional rectilinear confines, it opens up the opportunity to make the whole exhibition space the artwork. It provides the opportunity for different modes of engagement with painting, specifically bodily, spatial and relational engagement.

As a reflexive relationship with the viewer is what distinguishes pictorial space from surface, an initial area of investigation was to examine how and why the viewer engages with the patterns I would paint. John Elderfield argues that the viewer is necessary to turn on the engine that is a painting and to keep it running.\(^77\) I established that we often engage with pattern because of its utility for classification and prediction. I chose to investigate four ways in which we use it in a series of painted installations. I determined that these installations would be site-responsive so that the act of installation became an intrinsic part of the work and the site was included in the pictorial space.

In my studio experiments I identified and used five material and formal devices to extend pictorial space to investigate my research question. Through these devices I extended the paintings' edge across the two-dimensional surfaces of walls and floor. I made works that extended from the wall into the third dimension of the gallery space, into illusionary space, and suggested the fourth dimension of time. The first device was the manipulation and omission of pattern elements to suggest visual and physical paths through the work. The second was the extension of painted surface into the third dimension by working with

folded paper and three-dimensional supports. Thirdly I used colour and form in pattern to produce conflicting images and create illusionary space. The fourth device was the use of modular supports to create non-rectilinear site-responsive works. The use of layering to evoke the fourth dimension of time was the fifth device.

Using these techniques, I incorporated the installation space into the extended pictorial space of my work. The result was a series of works where painting expressed not only my own experiences of pattern and light but also evoked memories and associations.

As my research progressed beyond investigating pattern as a means of measurement and orientation, the strongest association evoked through my installations was that of home and domestic space. Coupled with my observations of the way contemporary artists use installation to create affect, this led me to draw a parallel between the process of installation and that of placing one’s possessions within the home. By siting the viewer within the work, the experience of occupying a space strongly evokes a demarcation or claiming of territory to the exclusion of other space that becomes ‘outside’. Pattern as an indicator of social or ethnic affiliation marks the area as belonging and further reinforces this claiming of space.

My project was driven by the material investigations that I had previously pursued in an intuitive manner in my studio practice. However, as my research progressed, I was able to identify and pursue several lines of enquiry that related to the way in which we use and engage with pattern. Through the methodology of testing by installation and evaluation, I extended the expressive potential of painted pattern beyond the experience of visual engagement with colour and design that a conventional rectilinear painting of pattern provides.
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